

## **Greetings Saints of Emmanuel:**

*When will Jesus return?*

It's already the eleventh day of Advent. Where did that moment go, that minute, that day, that week, that year go, ... and so on? We come to our senses and wonder just how quickly the time went. Time seems to evaporate.

Yet, if we were to ever get a glimpse of time from God's perspective, just imagine how full every moment is. Billions of people; billions of thoughts and movements and ideas and decisions. And all of it, every second of it, necessary and full, bringing the whole of God's will to fruition, moment by moment, day by day, year by year.

Jesus will return when the time is full and right. And until then, every moment matters to him and is ushering forwards his coming in glory.

In Christ our Lord,  
+ Pastor Justin Baker

### **Today, Wednesday, December 10th**

#### **11:00 AM Prayer Group**

*Since it is the second Wednesday of the month, prayer group will meet on Zoom. This will be the only meeting this month because of the holidays.*

#### **6:00 PM Crockpot of Chicken Corn Chowder, Bread, & German Cookies**

*Join us in Heritage Hall for refreshments before our weekly evening worship service!*

#### **7:00 PM Advent Midweek Service**

*Following refreshments, we will meet in the sanctuary to pray a Compline service. We will do this every Wednesday in Advent.*

**See the bulletin for tonight's service [here](#).**

## **Newsworthy**

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### **Lamplighter Luncheon This Saturday**

The time has finally come for our yearly Christmas party! If you need help with travel to The Lamplighter or with the cost, please reach out to the office or to Pastor Justin.

### **Poinsettia Orders**

The deadline to order poinsettias has passed, but if you missed it, we ordered a few extras. Please reach out to the office as soon as possible to let us know if you would like to purchase one of these extras (this count is final, so once they're gone there will be no more opportunities).

### **Christmas Gifts for Brookdale Residents | Due Before Dec. 19th**

*We Will Plan to Deliver Dec. 19 as part of the Caroling Worship Service*

We are collecting Christmas gifts to take to Brookdale residents this season. The table in the Narthex has a list of names and suggested gifts for them. All residents can accept shampoo, body wash, and lotion as well. Please take a name (or names!) and bring in gifts wrapped and clearly labelled with the resident's name (no later

than Monday, Dec. 15th) to put under the table. Please contact Debbie Weigold with any questions!

### **New Members Class | Beginning February**

For all those who are ready to become members of Emmanuel, there will be a new member's class beginning in February. If you would like to signup, please let Pastor or the Office know.

### **Portals of Prayer**

The new Portals of Prayer devotions (January-March) are now available in the Narthex. Be sure to grab yours!

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### **A Thank You from the ELC Women**

A huge thank you to everyone who attended or contributed to our Advent event and social. We raised a total of \$580 for our giftaway, and we are so thankful for your generosity!

### **United Together, We Pray**

#### *Prayers for Mission Workers*

For the Omars and their ministry among Muslims in the Atlanta region; for the Thorstads in their work in Laos & Thailand; and for Dure Negassa and the Rev. Gemachu in their ministry in Kenya among the Oromos.

#### *Prayers for those in need of Intercession:*

George and Donna Campagna, Linda Casper, Suzanne & Ernesto Carns & family, May Hill, Jim Troxell, David Weihe, Vince Berardinelli, Gayle Wertz, June Ugen, Addison, Sandra, Zachary, Kevin, David, Kathy, Asa, Jerry, Jack, Al & family, Beth, Colleen, Rachael, Leila, Darin, Les & Cathy, Tony, Sarah, and Harry

#### *Prayers of Bereavement*

Most Blessed and Holy God, we implore you to remember *the family of Debbie Pritts, the family of Cathy, the family of Rosalie, the family of Ray, and the family of Tom*. Fill all families who mourn with the strength to grieve, the comfort of your presence, and faith unto life everlasting.

#### *Prayer for this Church*

*We pray that you will fill this congregation with the faith that endures unto life eternal. We pray that you make us one people united in prayer. We pray that you will send families, children, widows & widowers, the elderly, and any others into our midst, that they may also be filled with faith, encourage this congregation, and bring honor and glory and praise to your name.*

### **Worship**

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### **Today, Wednesday, the 10th: Light Meal, 6PM | Advent Service, 7PM**

This evening, we will have refreshments and a worship service, as is our custom during Advent.

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## From Sunday's Sermon

"When the sun, moon, and stars collapse in on us, it's too late. When the all the nations are that distressed over the waves of the waters, it's too late.

What then? The usual signs of the sun, moon, and stars themselves remind us to keep alert, to be prepared.

I'm more attuned to the moon lately, to when it's a full moon and so forth, because Olive loves to see the moon. "The moon, the moon!" And so, just a few days ago, we were treated to a Supermoon, when the moon is a bit closer to the earth, and thus, seems a bit larger. It always seems a bit spookier that way, especially when it's not pure white, especially when it's got hues of orange. It's supposed to be a bit spookier.

One day, the moon will actually be too close. And its natural orbit is preparing us, reminding us, helping us to anticipate that day that is coming — the dawn of Christ in glory.

So, too, the eclipses are given; so, too, the tumult of the nations; so, too, the crescendoing waves. These regular signs are given for us to be regularly reminded of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, who does not want any one of us to be unaware about his return, or to be caught faithless."

Watch this past Sunday's sermon [here](#) or read it [here](#).

And if you missed last week's Wednesday service, watch the homily [here](#) or read it [here](#).

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### Is the origin of Christmas pagan?

If you have questions about the origins of some of our Christmas traditions, see [this article](#) to learn more about where the Christmas traditions we use came from, and why they are *not* linked to paganism, as you might have heard.

See below for some useful graphics that offer a deep dive into the origin of the main elements of Christmas, from the date itself all the way down to mistletoe!

### SO WHERE DOES DEC. 25 COME NOT FROM IF IT'S PAGAN?

The date of Christmas was never an appropriation or supplanting of pagan festivals. All of the evidence points to the fact that early Christians genuinely believed that Jesus' birth took place on Dec. 25th and celebrated it as such.



Sextus Julius Africanus, *Chronographia* Volume 1.

#### Sextus Julius Africanus

The origin of December 25th as the date for Christmas finds its beginnings in the late second and early third century with the historian Sextus Julius Africanus. Africanus, wrote a volume titled *Chronographia*, an early Christian treatise that attempted to chronologically cover world history from creation up until his own day. Based on calculations from his reading of Luke and Matthew's Gospels, Africanus concluded that Jesus was conceived on March 25th. For the birth then, he counted nine months ahead which landed him on the date of December 25th.



#### Hippolytus of Rome

Hippolytus of Rome, wrote a commentary on the book of Daniel in the early third century. In it he states that Jesus was born "eight days before the Calends of January," which would have been December 24th or 25th.

Hippolytus of Rome, *Commentary on Daniel* 4.23.



#### Tertullian

& The Death / Birth Concept

There was an idea within early Christianity that if you were really holy you would die on the day you were conceived or born. This was calculated mainly because the Old Testament would record the life of individuals

like Moses and present round numbers (without adding months or days). The most holy man who ever lived was Jesus, therefore many within the early church thought he *must* have died on his birthday. The ancient Christian writer Tertullian, in *Adversus Judaeos*, stated that Christ suffered "In the month of March, at the time of the Passover, on the eighth day before the Calends of April." That day would have been March 25th. If that was also the day of the Incarnation, it explains why the early Church set the date for Christmas nine months later on December 25th.



#### Augustine

Augustine in the fourth century attests to the ongoing tradition of Jesus' birth being on Dec. 25th. He wrote, "For he [Jesus] is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also he suffered; so the womb of the Virgin, in which he was conceived, where no one of mortals was begotten, corresponds to the new grave in which he was buried, wherein was never man laid, neither before him nor since."



Augustine of Hippo, *On the Trinity*, from McGowen, "December 25th."

# CHRISTMAS IS NOT A PAGAN HOLIDAY

Celebrating the incarnation of Jesus at Christmas is a longstanding Christian tradition spanning over a millennia. Although there has clearly been growth, lore, and traditions added to our modern practice of the holiday the accusation of substantial pagan roots falls apart under historical inspection. All the traditional "pagan" associations and connections with Christmas, when truly put under the microscope, turn out to be themselves more fiction than fact.

DEC. 25th



The date of Christmas is borrowed from pagan festivals like Sol Invictus and / or Saturnalia

claim

Winter Solstice

SANTA



"Santa"

The Winter Solstice had no festive significance to ancient Romans. There were no celebrations planned for the date and they disagreed on when it was. The Julian Calendar does say 12/25, but Pliny the Elder says 12/26, and Columella says 12/23.

reality

Sol Invictus was not placed on 12/25 until 354 AD when the Philocalian Calendar records this but doesn't specify any festival with regards to sun worship. Prior to this, the Julio-Claudian fasti inscriptions say Sun festivals were on August 8th, 9th, 28th, and December 11th, and maybe October 19th. The Philocalian Calendar says Emperor Aurelian honored the sun with chariot races every 4 years Oct 19-22.

Saturnalia

Saturnalia was never on 12/25. Macrobius says Saturnalia began 14 days before January, which comes out to December 17th, using Roman Calendrical dates. He says it lasted for 3 days, but according to the Fasti inscriptions, it lasted to the 24th during the days of the Republic.

Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary, 2003 edition, page 1303. Original quote: "Saturnalia began 14 days before January, which comes out to December 17th, using Roman Calendrical dates. He says it lasted for 3 days, but according to the Fasti inscriptions, it lasted to the 24th during the days of the Republic."

"Father Christmas"

Father Christmas, surprisingly, pre-dates Santa Claus. But he is not a pagan deity. Instead, he was a medieval personification of Christmas. Richard Smart of Plymtree is the first to write about him, referring to him as Sir Christmas, and his task is to announce the birth of Christ

Oxford Book of Carols, no. 21, 40-3

Santa Claus can only be traced back to Dutch immigrants in New York in the early 1800s. He came from the Dutch Sinterklaas, also known as St. Nicolas. His feast day was on 12/6 and was moved to 12/25 around this time to help make Christmas a family holiday. Newspapers promoted it and encouraged to give gifts on Christmas instead of New Years' like it traditionally was before this. Sinterklaas was rebranded from a catholic priest to look like a traditional dutchman from that time period, which included a big red suit. After this Santa was exported around the world and different countries added new spins. Stockings were also promoted around this time period and trace back to Clement C. Moore's "A Visit from St. Nicholas." In 1927, in Finland, a radio broadcaster, Markus Rautio, morphed the old pagan deity, Joulupukki, into a Santa figure. Santa changed the Joulupukki figure, not the other way around.

A dictionary of English Folklore, section: Santa

claim

Christmas trees find their origin in druid and pagan practices of bringing pine trees into one's house to ward off nature spirits.

CHRISTMAS TREES



reality

Christmas trees only go back to the 16th century in Europe. The first mention of Christmas trees is in an Alsace ordinance in the 16th century. Almost no early pagans thought pine trees were sacred, let alone associated with 12/25. Germanic tribes believed the oak was sacred. Maximus of Tyre said, "The Celts indeed worship Zeus, but they honour Him in the form of a lofty oak."

MISTLETOE

Mistletoe does not go back to paganism. The first we hear of using mistletoe as Christmas decorations are in Robert Herrick, "Hesperides poetry collection," (1602, 980), and then William Cole mentions it is a decoration in "The Art of Simpling" (1600s). The tradition of kissing under it did not begin until the end of the 18th century in Britain.

"A dictionary of English Folklore," section: Mistletoe

## Discipleship

### Sunday School, 9AM

#### Sunday School Class

We will continue our study of *Live Not By Lies* through December.

### Bible Study on the Book of Daniel | Mondays, 1PM & 6:30PM

#### From Daniel

God always fulfills his promises, and always uses his people — whether in their faithfulness or unfaithfulness — to be a light to the nations. Here, Judah's very rejection of God is what sets the stage for Babylon to receive God. And then, Babylon's subsequent rejection of God is what sets the stage for Judah to return to faithfulness to God.

[View the Key for Chapter One Here](#)

[View Last Week's Lesson Here](#)

## Fellowship & Evangelism

### Upcoming Christmas Luncheon

Please join us this Saturday for the annual Emmanuel Christmas party! We will meet at The Lamplighter (6566 Route 22, Delmont, PA) on Saturday the 13th at

noon. Here is the menu: stuffed chicken breast, lettuce salad, mashed potatoes with gravy on the side, green beans, fruit cup, and assorted desserts, with a cash bar also available.

Make sure to get your check (made out to Julie Schamber) or cash, \$22.00 per person, to Julie Schamber.

If you need help with transportation to the luncheon, please reach out to Julie or the office! We will help you coordinate a carpool.

The Fellowship and Evangelism Committee will cover the cost for anyone who may find the lunch to be a financial burden. We wouldn't want anyone to be left out. Please reach out to the office for assistance.

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### **GriefShare**

This is a video based, facilitator led program. Read more information and see an introductory video [here](#). We'll plan to meet with potential facilitators soon, and begin making a plan to roll this out from there.

## **Stewardship**

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Let us know if you need any help around your home. A few members of the church would like to help!

### **More This Week**

#### **December 10th**

11AM: Prayer Group  
6PM: Midweek Refreshments  
7PM: Advent Worship Service

#### **December 11th**

2PM: Stewardship Meeting  
7PM: Girl Scouts  
7:30PM: Al-Anon

#### **December 12th**

5:30PM: Girl Scouts  
6:00PM: Girl Scouts

#### **December 13th**

12PM: Christmas Party at The Lamplighter  
**December 14th**

9AM: Live Not By Lies  
10:15AM: Worship on the Third Sunday of Advent  
After Worship: Decorate the church

#### **December 15th**

11AM: Fellowship and Evangelism Meeting  
1PM: Daniel Bible Study  
2PM: Quilting with the ELCW

6:30PM: Daniel Bible Study

6:30PM: Start the Week

### December 16th

9AM: Bell Choir

10AM: Bell Choir Subset

6PM: Champion Cheerleading

7PM: Boy Scouts

### December 17th

Deadline for Brookdale Christmas Presents

10AM: Discipleship Meeting

11:30AM: Council Meeting

6PM: Midweek Refreshments

7PM: Advent Worship Service

### Upcoming Birthdays & Anniversaries

#### **Birthdays:**

12/13 David Weihe

12/16 Faith Palmer

12/17 Donna Berardinelli

12/28 Angela Held

12/29 James Troxell

12/30 Carol McDowell

12/31 George Campagna

#### **Anniversaries:**

There are currently no recorded anniversaries in December. Please contact the office if we've missed one!

### **Worship Volunteers**

Volunteer scheduling will now be coordinated by the church office. If you typically volunteer, look out for an email coming soon with more information about what this will look like!

### **Photo Gallery on Our Website!**

We've added a photo gallery to our website to make pictures easier to access and view (and to make the newsletter clearer). Contact the office to add pictures of events to the gallery! (We will feature fewer photos in the newsletters so that we can include more on the website.) View the website photos [here](#).

[Download the Bulletin](#)



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